THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

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IN PRAISE OF "CONCERT IN RAGTIME"

"Anyone interested enough in ragtime to subscribe to the Ragtime Society Newsletter, and thus be reading these remarks, will miss a landmark in the rediscovery of ragtime if he misses the John Arpin LP. It is superb in every way.

"One of the most elusive qualities of classic piano ragtime is its grace and charm; perhaps 'felicity' is the word. This is the quality so difficult to describe to someone who has only the conventional understanding and exposure to rag. At last we have an album to demonstrate this quality once and for all. Arpin's unerring taste combines with his flawless touch to capture every nuance of composers Joplin, Lamb and Scott.

"And yet, Arpin swings. Or maybe he 'rags.' Simply this -- the beat is there, always. So the syncopations ring out.

"The quality of recording is first-rate, and all the material is performed on a fine instrument. It's a great album."

-Max Morath

There's not much we can add to the ultimate encomium, except thank you, Max. And we would like to thank all of you who waited so patiently for delivery of "Concert in Ragtime." All orders were shipped by December 1st, and all future orders will be shipped the same day they are received.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

1966 membership renewals are coming in at a fast clip -- but how about you? Slip $3 into the mail today and support your Ragtime Society during its quinquennial. There will be more records, more music, more ragtime during 1966; don't miss out on it.

MAKING NOTES

Being rather closely connected with the graphic arts in my regular line of employ, I have always had a vague interest in the reproduction of sheet music and, specifically, in the art of autography. (I'm not sure whether "autography" is the correct word; what is meant is the preparation of a manuscript for printing.)

There are at least five methods of assembling the myriad notes, clefs, time and key signatures, rests, braces, staves, bars and accent symbols which are contained in the composer's rough manuscript. One of the oldest methods, and one which is

still practiced, is to hand-engrave the symbols directly onto the metal printing plate. In view of more recent developments, this would seem to be doing it the hard way -- not only must the autographer be a skilled artist and something of a musician, but he must be a master engraver as well.

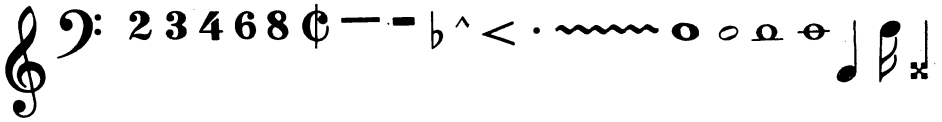
A somewhat easier method - and one which most amateurs use - involves a blank sheet of manuscript paper, a pen and a bottle of India ink. (At the professional level it also calls for a rock-steady hand, an unerring eye and years of practice.) The do-it-yourself autographer can save himself some time and effort by purchasing manuscript paper on which the staves, treble and bass clefs and braces are pre-printed. There are also special pens and nibs for music writing; one nib has a very flexible point which is split into three segments. When you press down, the nib spreads; when you release pressure, the segments come together again. Thus, when you get the hang of it, you can draw a complete oval notehead at one stroke.

Some professionals use a series of inked rubber stamps to put notes and symbols onto paper. One autographer here in Toronto uses a gigantic magnetized board the size of a wall on which is drawn a page of staves, clefs and braces. He then walks around positioning notes and symbols which are large metal cutouts. When the page is complete, he photographs it from the other end of the room, clears the board and starts building the next page.

One of the most recent advances in autography has been the development of the music-reproducing typewriter. Various versions of this machine have come on the market within the last few years, but they all seem to give the same result: beautifully clear, sharp music copy, and a skilled operator can lay out a line of music - including staves - in a matter of minutes.

There is one other method which will possibly be of interest to the amateur autographers among us. Many of you are probably familiar with Letraset - a method of instant lettering which works on the direct transfer principle. You simply position the sheet of lettering, select the particular letter you want and rub over it with a pointed instrument. Lift the sheet and you have a very professional piece of artwork. Well, Letraset has come out with a sheet of music symbols (sheet S1985) which retails for about $2 at your local art and drafting supplies dealer.

Like all Letraset products, this sheet gives very good results; however, the symbols are not too well laid out. For instance, there are far too many time signatures, far too few quarter notes and rest symbols, plus a lot of symbols that you'd never use in a million years. With a bit of improvisation you could probably transcribe the average rag using one sheet of Letraset. It's fiddly, finnicky work, though, and you still have a fair amount of pen work, but the results are worth it. Here are just some of the symbols you get on this sheet of Letraset:



We would be very happy to receive any further information - or preferably articles - on the art of autographing music. We'd be particularly interested to learn who among our members are skilled at it and who might consider autographing some original ragtime manuscripts for reproduction. Let's hear from you. -Bob Ashforth

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Bostonian Roger Hankins and his whippet 'Tasko'

Roger Hankins owns one of the most prodigious collections of ragtime sheet music we've ever heard of -- over 2,000 large sheet music instrumentals at last count.

Roger began collecting in November, 1961. Up until then he had only been interested in popular songs, but began looking for a way to get a little more bounce into his left hand. One day he heard a recording of MAPLE LEAF and felt maybe ragtime would help him improve his playing. It was a short step from there to the Darch album and the two Riverside LP's of piano rolls . . . and then he found himself on a frantic search for rags.

Over the years Roger has cultivated a number of local music stores, although the first one he tried proved to be the most profitable. He looked up "Music Stores" in the Yellow Pages of the Boston phone book and as luck would have it, the first one he hit was a small bonanza. Their ad said "If published, we have it" and they did -- two copies of WALL STREET, GLADIOLUS, SUGAR CANE and a flock of others. All this at 20¢ a copy from a sympathetic saleslady!

The bulk of Roger's collection came from that particular store and from people like Dean Snyder of California, the late George Goodwin of Song-Dex in New York and Harold Doerr of St. Louis, although he says his collecting sources have pretty well dried up now. Last summer he paid a visit to the old music store only to find that new management had taken over and pretty well cleaned out the old stock. Now everything is disgustingly modern and up to date.

However, Roger still has a little luck on occasion at a local charity outfit which sells old junk, books, clothing and sheet music. He has made a few finds at this source: a collection of real oldies including the DARKIE TICKLE, all in mint condition . . . a batch of Stark publications including NON PAREIL . . . and once he walked in just as another fellow was walking out with a perfect copy of MISSISSIPPI RAG and a couple of others. Roger says the price is right at this establishment — two for a nickle.

In four years of hunting and trading, Roger has built up his collection to the 2,000 mark, including Cake-Walks and Animal Trots which are kept separate from the "strictly rags." A Boston banker by profession ("hardly an exciting life"), Roger finds ragtime enjoyable since it's such a contrast to his regular work. Perhaps his interest in ragtime was predestined — he was born on the same day the MAPLE LEAF RAG copyright was renewed.

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

We would like to thank the scores of Society members who take the time to send us notes, clippings and articles about the various aspects of ragtime and music in general. We deeply appreciate these, even though they don't all appear in the Newsletter.

At this time we would like to announce the appointment of a new member to our Editorial staff: Mr. Thomas W. Shea of Garden City, Michigan, has joined the staff as our Detroit Bureau Contributing Editor. Well known in ragtime circles, Mr. Shea brings to his new post a wealth of information and experience, as well as a keen interest in ragtime history and research. We are delighted to have Tom on staff, and look forward to publishing many interesting articles and items from him.

If you would like to contribute articles to the Newsletter on a continuing basis - or if you have a specific research idea in mind - please let know, we'll supply as much help and enthusiasm as we can. (Research grants and Editorial staff salaries are discouragingly nonexistent, but it's a clean life, good fun and it keeps you off the streets.)

DISCOGRAPHY

Tom Ross of Beloit, Wisconsin, has sent the following list of solo piano 10" LP's from his collection:

LABEL	ARTIST	TITLE	COMMENTS
Jazzman LJ-335	Marvin Ash	"Marvin Ash"	Joplin's SEARCHLIGHT, Luckey Roberts' MUSIC BOX + other lesse known compositions - all rags but not classics
Jump JL-4	Marvin Ash	"Marvin Ash"	Lodge's TEMPTATION + originals, blues, standards
Circle L-411	Armand Hug	"New Orleans 88"	Plays Morton, Joplin, Zurke, others
Bluenote BLP-7011	James P. Johnson	"Stomps, Rags and Blues"	Own compositions
Decca DL-5190	James P. Johnson	"The Daddy of the Piano"	Own compositions
Paramount CJS-103	Kansas City Frank Melrose	"Blues Piano Traditionalist"	Legendary Jelly Roll-influenced Chicago pianist
Columbia CL-6260	Wally Rose	"Ragtime Piano Masterpieces"	Terrific Rose - classic rags played on a honky-tonk piano
Stinson SLP-58	Johnny Wittwer	"Piano Rags, Stomps and Blues"	Played with great feeling and technique
45 EP			
Good Time Jazz EP-1004	Don Ewell	"Don Ewell's Piano Jazz"	3 Jelly Roll & 1 James P. styled numbers - superbly done
78 R.P.M.			
Joco Records Jazz Heritage Vol. III	Mel Grant	"Professor Ragtime"	Fine Chicago-based stride pianist

GLENN ROWELL, 1899-1965

We were very sorry to learn from several sources that Glenn Rowell died on October 8th in Rapid City, South Dakota. Marge Traeger kindly sent us Glenn's obituary from the Rapid City paper, which we reproduce here:

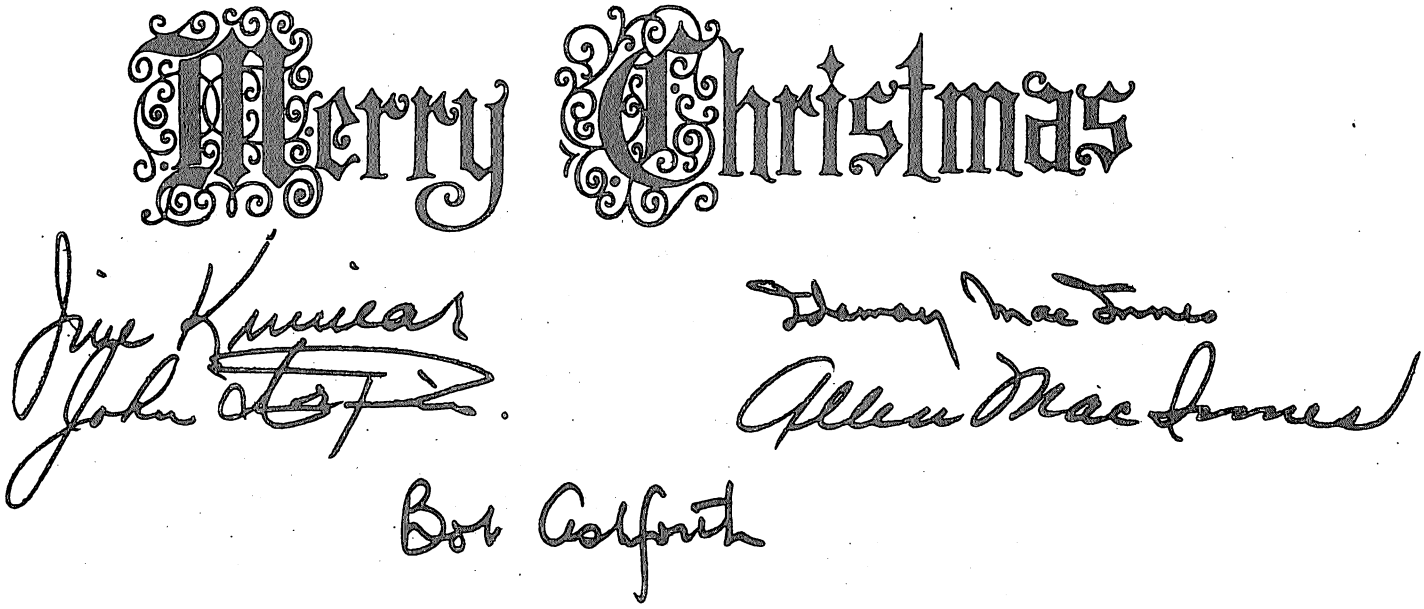
"A veteran radio and television personality, Glenn Rowell, 65, died in a Rapid City hospital Friday following a long illness. Rowell is remembered by area children as the star of 'Captain Glenn's Fun Wagon,' a popular children's television program for several years. The older generation remembers him as half of the 'Gene and Glenn' radio program which featured the voices of Lena and Jake. Rowell and Gene Carroll worked as a team on the program which was popular during the depression years. He also teamed with Ford Rush to found the National Barn Dance program in Chicago in 1925. He was the first to record I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS and he wrote the words to I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS. He wrote hundreds of other songs and hymns. Born Nov. 2, 1899, in Pontiac, Ill., he was educated there and attended Strausberger's Conservatory of Music in St. Louis, Mo. He was a pianist and arranger for a music publishing house in St. Louis. In the early 1920's he went to Chicago and worked in a dime store plugging songs and played the piano during silent movies. In 1924 he and Rush started working during testing hours for a new Chicago radio station and when the station, WLS, was licensed they worked full-time. Rowell originated the first children's TV program in New York and later entertained children in Cleveland, Ohio. He came to Rapid City in 1955 where he and his partner, Al McDonald, did a morning radio show in addition to the afternoon children's program on television and a variety show. Rowell was the first to do a charity marathon broadcast and continued to work for charity projects throughout the years. His 'Help the kid around the corner' was the theme for the March of Dimes. Another phase of Rowell's career started in 1963 when he teamed with Johnny Maddox to make the first long play album featuring two old-time pianos. The team also appeared together at Toronto, Canada, the Bahama Islands, Denver and Rapid City. Survivors include his widow, the former Mae Siebrecht, a son and a daughter. His first wife preceded him in death."

FROM OUR READERS

Russell J. Stettler, Allentown, Pa.: "I read the story about Marvin Ash with a great deal of interest. Twelve to fifteen years ago, a local radio station featured a barbershop quartet and one or two piano solos by Marvin Ash on a 15-minute program five evenings each week. I seldom missed these programs. They were recorded in New York probably on discs and sent out to the various radio stations for broadcast. Ash played such numbers as CALICO RAG by Johnson, HUNGARIAN RAG by Lenzberg, HIAWATHA by Moret, etc."

Russell adds a plea to the professionals: "Why is it that Darch, Maddox, Morath, etc, appear at hotels, clubs, etc, located at places that are in the most distant corners of the U.S. and Canada insofar as Pennsylvania is concerned? Hope one of them will appear in a city within a short distance of Allentown at some future date."

As we suspected, it would seem that the Sounds "Piano Roll Ragtime" LP which we announced last time is a reissue. According to Allan D. Meyer, Orinda, California: "Some of the items were cribbed from Riverside RLP 12-126, others from Riverside RLP-110 - 'Ragtime Piano Roll Classics' and 'The Golden Age of Ragtime' respectively, while MAPLE LEAF RAG was taped from the defunct San Francisco Records album M-33010 called 'Plinkety-Plank-Plunk.'"

Paul Affeldt, Ventura, California: "In reply to your query about Ray Turner: Karl Leaf played with Ray Turner a good many times while working with studio dance orchestras around Los Angeles, and describes him as probably the finest and most-in-demand pianist in the area. He could nearly name his price for a date and was almost never without work unless he chose to be so. He was apparently as much at home with classics as with ragtime and read music like a demon, as well as having a built-in penchant for improvisation. As far as I know, Ray is still around but seems to be suffering somewhat with arthritis in his hands (an ailment that has incapacitated many other fine pianists, including Cow Cow Davenport). George Probert reported that Ray played at Disneyland a year or so ago while the Firehouse Five were there, and that he (George) noticed Ray spending each intermission with hand-warmers and much massage. He reports that it didn't seem to affect his playing appreciably, as he was still pretty fantastic."

Lorne McEachnie, Toronto: "Returned to Toronto in August after spending about ten days in San Francisco, of which many days and evenings were spent with Wally Rose. He is still currently playing at the elegant 'Cirque Room' lounge in the Fairmount Hotel, and will be there well into the fall and possibly longer. Basically, Wally is playing a repertoire of standard pop tunes, show tunes, etc, to appease the type of crowd in this room, but occasionally (and always when requested) he will break into some of his recorded rag selections."